DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 410 CS 011 839

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TITLE Developing an Early Intervention Reading Program for the Primary Grades of a Public School.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 59p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Learning; *Early Intervention; *High Risk Students; Primary Education; Program Effectiveness; Public Schools; Reading Achievement; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Programs

ABSTRACT

A practicum analyzed possible alternatives to identify the most successful reading intervention strategies before a child's development and learning is seriously or permanently impaired. K-3 students were identified for an early intervention reading program in a public school setting, through the Students Study Team, which was expanded to include specialists, parents, and categorically funded staff, so that students could receive reading intervention long before they had failed sufficiently to require placement in special education. Students read to, and were read to, by teachers and participated in cooperative learning groups for about seven weeks. Although the program took place at the end of the year, staff, parents, and children felt the program was successful and merited expansion from K-3 to K-12 for the following year. (Contains 44 references. Appendixes present pre- and posttest instruments, a parent survey, a calendar of activities, and a description of performance levels for reading.) (Author/RS)

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ED 374 410

DEVELOPING AN EARLY INTERVENTION READING PROGRAM FOR THE PRIMARY GRADES OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL

Patricia Hilty

Practicum Report

Nova Southeastern University

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

June 17, 1994
Date

Patricia Hilty
Signature of Student

ABSTRACT

Developing an early intervention reading program in the primary grades of a public school. Hilty, Patricia, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Master's Programs in Life Span Care and Administration. Descriptors: Early Childhood Education/ Young Children/Preschool Curriculum/Emergent Literacy/ Student Study Team/ Early Intervention Strategies.

The report analyzes possible alternatives to identify the most successful reading intervention strategies before a child's development and learning is seriously or permanently impaired. K-3 students were identified for an early intervention reading program in a public school setting, through the Student study team, wahich was expanded to include specialists, parents, and categorically funded staff, so that students could receive reading intervention long before they had failed sufficiently to require placement in special education. Although the program took place at the end of the year, staff parents and children felt the program was successful and merited expansion from K-3 to K-12 for the following year. Appendices include the narrative, expository pre and post tests and the performance levels.

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Chapter I - Introduction and Background

The four primary classrooms that were targeted in this practicum are located in a K - 8 elementary school in the southwestern corner of the U.S.A. The total population of the area is 6500 distributed over three small outlying rural towns. This desert valley area is 30 miles from a metropolitan area near the Mexican border and 120 miles from a large city.

The population of the county was estimated to be 145,000 in the 1990 census. Minorities comprise 71% of the county's population. This figure is the highest concentration of minorities of any county in the state. Of the total, 66% are Hispanic, 29% are Anglo, 2% are black, and 3% are other (Community Economic Development,1991).

The county's unemployment rate, one of the highest in the United States, fluctuates between 25% and 30% all year with the higher percentage in the summer when the migrant farm laborers go elsewhere.

Of the total labor force in the rural towns from which the children come in this elementary school, persons aged 16 and older,only 36% are employed. (Employment Development Department, Aug. 3,1993) The median household income for the area is $6,952, compared to $25,200 for the state where this practicum took place.

For the 1993 - 1994 school year, there were 124 students in grades K - 3 in the targeted elementary school, 87% of whom were eligible to receive free and reduced lunches. In October, 1993, approximately 56% of the families were receiving Aid for Families with Dependent Children. According to the 1990 Census information, the average educational level of the children's families was below high school graduate.

The targeted school had nine self contained classrooms, one grade per class, and a 30 computer lab to which all students had access daily for 40 minutes. During the implementation period, all students received the same level of computer assisted instruction simultaneously per grade although students of the same age had different developmental levels. Tutoring sessions and remedial programs for Chapter 1 and migrant students took place after school hours on a voluntary basis. There was a functioning school site council to advise on supplemental programs and, in general, school activities had been well attended by families.

The adverse socioeconomic conditions over past generations along with the isolated rural location had given rise to the tremendous lack of exposure to a rich oral and written language.

In general, the influence of the home on the education of children is without question. During the child's early learning years the total pattern of achievement is influenced more by the home and parent than by the school and teacher.

The author developed attitudes and understandings to enable parents to become effective partners with their children's teachers; to create and maintain a language rich school environment where the children and parents can feel successful in their native language, and to reduce significantly the expense and energies previously directed toward remedial programs by means of education aimed at early intervention.

Learning... good, bad, or mediocre, whether emotional, social, or intellectual is permanently phased in at an early age and very difficult to change in later years. Efforts to rectify attitudinal, emotional,and intellectual underachievement as children progress through the grades are expensive and frequently ineffective. Children who experience initial failure in school are those who later may need expensive remediation.

As the federal and state projects director reporting directly to the district superintendent, the author was responsible for assisting five schools,(one K -8, one K-4, one 5 -8, one 9 -12, and one continuation high school) in

developing, implementing, modifying, and evaluating state, federal, and other grant programs. The writer's responsibility was to prepare applications and grants for state and federally funded programs. All site level expenditures of restricted funds were supervised, monitored, and approved by the writer. Another of this writer's duties was to prepare reports required by state, federal and other grant programs. The writer also arranged for training for staff to serve as reviewers for Program Quality Reviews. This writer supervised the procedure for all the schools in the Coordinated Compliance Review, Program Quality Reviews, and Western Association of Secondary Schools Accreditation process.

The District Bilingual Advisory Committee was another of the writer's responsibilities in regards to overseeing the agenda and communication of all representative parent groups with the school board. Last, but not least, as a member of the district's management team for problem solving and uniformity of the K - 12 instructional programs, policies, and services, the writer helped to ensure that all children learn successfully through total access to the core curriculum with integrated supplemental instruction.

For the past twenty years, the writer taught Spanish and English as a second language at all levels in the United States and Mexico, directed Language Academies and worked as a bilingual executive secretary for American companies in Mexico. Two years previous to this report, the writer directed a dual county federal Migrant Head Start program, responsible for the total operation in accordance with federal regulations, state licensing regulations and the Head Start Act performance standards.

CHAPTER 2 - THE PROBLEM

After analyzing the results of norm referenced and performance based testing of students at the junior high and high school levels over the past five years, this writer became aware that although students' mathematical performance was at or above grade level, language performance was significantly lower than grade level 64% percent of all students scored at or below one third achievement, leading this writer to conclude that the most pressing problem the school district faced was elevating the literacy level of the child upon enrolling in school for the first time. Due to the lack of early intervention strategies to elevate literacy, the children's language level at enrollment continued at the same rate through the entire educational system. Children in grades k - 3 experienced years of failure before qualifying for any support services funded through categorical programs. Frequently, this lengthy period of sustained failure had long term crippling effects on a child's rate of learning, levels of achievement, and internal motivation to be a successful, contributing school member. Most importantly, significant numbers of these children suffered from low self esteem and were often robbed of joyful, successful school experiences before meeting the criteria for help from special education. At this point, they were so far below their expected levels of achievement that they were unable to be successful in a full time general education

program. Too many of these students did not find support for success until they fell so far behind thus becoming eligible for a particular categorical program which was only available to specific age groups, income levels, and / or learning disabled children.

Factors Contributing to the Problem

As discussed in Chapter 1, the socioeconomic background of the population of the area comprising the school district was low income. The median household income for the area was $6,952, compared to $25,200 for the state. Family composition was a contributing factor of the hardship. 23% of families were headed by single females with no spouse present in the home. 31% of the children lived below the poverty level. Lack of education was another contributing factor. In 1992, 45.5% of mothers giving birth in the county had less than 12 years of education. The county had the highest percentage of adults over age 25 who had not completed high school - 49% for the county as a whole and 62% among Hispanics, partly reflecting the large farm labor population. The harsh climate, economy, and isolation of the small communities all contributed to the lack of stimulating exposure to intellectual development. The tax revenues which form the income base for operation of the school district were extremely low due to lack of commercial activity and private ownership of tax generating property. This situation had caused a lack of competition to attract and retain experienced

credentialed teachers. Categorical funds had helped considerably to hire supplemental teachers' assistants, and fund a thirty computer lab directed by a teacher studying to be a reading specialist through the Miller - Unruh program. All students received computer instruction in the core curriculum areas forty minutes every day, although books and materials were at a minimum and many teachers were not yet fully credentialed.

Children in the targeted k-3 grades initiated formal schooling for the first time at the kindergarten level with very disparate levels of home literacy. These children were not prepared for the formal, structured style expected of them in the classroom.

Jeanne S. Chall in Stages of Reading Development(1983) states that children's language experiences upon entering school are very different from one another. Each child begins its formal education using language that reflects a particular environment, cultural and regional differences, and educational status and economic conditions of the parents.

As strange as it may seem, home language experiences, even though the same language as the school, have not prepared students for the formal structured style of language used in the classroom. Interacting in the classroom requires that children learn new ways of speaking, listening, and behaving. (Patricia A. Edwards Ph.D.,1991) The unfamiliar questions, new language patterns, and structured classroom routines make the home to school transitions very difficult for many children. For

children who are not prepared for this change from informal oral language to a formal classroom environment heavily influenced by print, their school experience can actually impede the learning process by causing children to doubt their capabilities.

Literature Review of the Problem from a General Perspective

Deborah Brandt stated, " Schools may have the official mission to bring literacy to students, but it is much more accurate to say that students bring literacy - or rather literacies - to school. Home literacy comes embedded in complex and emotional meanings that need to be acknowledged and built upon, not ignored or dismantled in school."

According to the U.S. Department of Education, one in five American adults is functionally illiterate - 20% of the total adult population in this country. In addition, another 34% of American adults are only marginally literate. In 1985, the National Assessment of Educational Progress assessed the literacy skills of America's young adults (21-25 years old) and found that 80% couldn't read a bus schedule, 73% couldn't interpret a news story, and 63% couldn't follow written map directions. A Census Bureau study conducted in 1982 suggested that between 17 and 21 million adults do not read at all or read below the fourth grade level. According to UNESCO, the U.S. ranks forty ninth among 156 United Nations member countries in its rate of literacy, and this current ranking reflects a drop of eighteen places since 1950. In the 1987 report entitled The

Subtle Danger: Reflections on the Literacy Abilities of America's Young Adults published by the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey, there is a heavy concentration of people with low literacy skills among the poor and those dependent upon public welfare. One half of all adults in federal and state correctional facilities cannot read or write, as reported in the 1986 publication of the National Institute of Corrections. The National Commission on Excellence in Education reported that 13% of all seventeen year olds in the U.S. are functionally illiterate. Among minority youth functional illiteracy now approaches 40%. Evidence indicates that the problem begins not in the school but at home. The influence of the home on the education is without question. During the child's early learning years the total pattern of achievement is influenced more by the home and parent than by the school and teacher. (NAEYC,1987)

In 1992 the Bush administration felt the literacy problem so severe that it became a federal initiative.

Due to the U.S. participation in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Americans needs to speak, read, and write in more languages than English besides being literate in high technology. Our entrance into the information age has augmented the basic skills necessary for survival. However, too many of our school systems and institutions of higher learning for teacher preparation are still preparing students for the industrial society of our great

grandfathers.

The most pervasive problem afflicting elementary education is a narrow focus on the acquisition of fragmented bits of information to the exclusion of more thought provoking content exploration that taps the child's real world experiences, feelings, and interests. Classrooms traditionally were set up for passive reception of unrelated data. The original rationale for the basic skills curriculum was rooted in behaviorist theory which held that students had to learn to crawl intellectually before they could walk or run. The application of this theory has not produced praiseworthy results. Confronted with a dull, repetitious, and uninspiring curriculum, many children react by withdrawing into a kind of intellectual passive resistance. (It's Elementary !, 1992)

In its 1988 report, Here They Come, Ready or Not, the state school readiness task force identfied the pushing down of the skill focused academic programs into the kindergarten and preschool years and the inappropriate reliance on passive rote learning as major concerns in need of corrective action.

The State Department of Education monitors the results of state mandated norm referenced and performance based exams and changed the curriculum frameworks in all subjects to include a more thinking, meaning centered curriculum for all students in active, participatory classrooms where teachers guide and students solve problems through application of information.

Teachers should now plan each lesson with the desired outcome as their goal.

With this end in mind, the school board adopted immediate measures to increase students' scores on state mandated norm referenced and performance based tests. All teachers were to identify objectives for learning on a daily basis and when these objectives were not learned, as evidenced by testing, they were retaught until they were sufficiently accomplished before going on to the following lesson. Children's performance became the focus, instead of just covering the material. However, the problem remained that too many of the students in the k - 3 grades encountered language difficulties founded in a host of environmental, familial, and economic factors that played a crucial role in the ability to learn and synthesize the curriculum content. Many of these students did not receive any needed services until they fell so far behind they might never catch up. This report analyzes possible alternatives to identify successful intervention strategies that take preventive action before a child's development and learning are seriously or permanently affected.

CHAPTER 3 - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1 - to increase student achievement through reading intervention in the primary grades.

Objective - At the end of the ten week reading intervention program, at least sixteen of the thirty two participants will increase one level on the performance level rubric for reading presented in appendix E in this report.

Goal 2 - To expand the student study team membership and responsibilities.

Objective - The student study referral form will reflect a team that met four times in ten weeks and included specialists, parents, teachers, and categorically funded personnel to identify and follow up on thirty two students in grades K - 3 reading at a level four and below referred to a ten week reading intervention program.

Goal 3 - To provide more opportunities for parents to learn how to help their children toward increased achievement.

Objective - At the end of ten weeks, sign - in sheets will reflect a twenty five per cent increase in parent attendance at all school functions.

Rationale for Goals

Early intervention may well be worth a lifetime of social usefulness because this is a stage in a child's development when learning problems are still small enough to be overcome. The indispensable link in a prevention oriented strategy of helping students before they acquire a self image of academic failure is an agressive program of literacy promotion. Reading is fundamental to most academic learning. The ability to read is highly predictive of future school success. A child's reading fluency at the third grade level gives a more accurate forecast of whether he or she will drop out or graduate from high school than any other indicator.

Categorical programs exist to help children with particular learning needs toward mastery of the core curriculum. They encourage the allocation of time and resources for coordination with the regular program.

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One of the most effective ways to demonstrate commitment to students who are encountering difficulty in the regular program is the Student Study Team. The purpose of the Student Study Team is to draw on the knowledge of the assembled educational staff to develop an action plan - with agreed upon benchmarks - for increasing students'success in school. More students experience success in the regular program. Fewer children are referred to special education and grade retention can be eliminated.

Research proving the positive effect of comprehensive programs to involve parents in all facets of the learning process is a fact and therefore, to be actively pursued as an integral part of school success. (It's Elementary Task Force Report, 1992)

CHAPTER 4 - REVIEW OF EXISTING PROGRAMS, MODELS, AND APPROACHES

Children acquire critical concepts about reading and writing from their daily experience long before they enter formal schooling. They learn about stories, about the way print works, and about important relationships such as sound-letter correspondence through functional or authentic experience with written language. These concepts seem to " emerge" from experience, thus the term " emergent literacy." (Clay,1979, 1991; Teale and Sulzby, 1986)

Pearce,(1977) states that a child learns from every interaction and all future learning is based on the character of these early, automatic patterns. The only criterion we have for what the infant, child, young adult, or adult is learning or has learned is interaction. Pearce (1977) goes on to say that intelligence is the ability to interact which can grow only by interacting with new phenomena, moving from that which is known into that which is not known. This is both the key and the obstacle to development. Thinking arises out of concreteness or physical knowledge toward abstract phenomena. The mother is the infant's basis for exploration of the world itself. Physical interaction with the mother furnishes the infant its basic set of brain patterns through which sensory information can be organized into perceptions.

Benjamin Bloom's studies on intellectual development reveal that 50% of a child's mature intellectual growth is developed by the age of four. Children need intellectual stimuli. They need parents to simply talk to them and stimulate their thinking processes. (Wolf, 1987)

Piaget found the infant of all cultures driven from within, with a non-volitional intent, to make the necessary physical interaction with the world. He called the results, the child's structure of knowledge. The child passes through clear developmental stages in its growth of intelligence, stages that parallel physical growth. Herman Epstein, a Brandeis University biophysicist found periodic brain growth spurts, the brain grows new biological materials for learning, and these occur every four years coinciding with Piaget's theory. The more we learn through personal experience, the more we can learn.

Nonverbal thinking is impossible to ignore in the lower grades because a child's language ability has not yet fully developed. As a child progresses through the grades, teachers should keep the attention of both verbal and nonverbal minds. If a child can be encouraged to make discovery nonverbally and then verbalize his findings, he will be practicing the creative process. When a child learns this way, he need not "memorize" because he will know it in a deeper, more intuitive way. (Blakeslee,1980)

McCollum,(1978) suggests that teachers develop a sensitivity to the confusing nature of word meanings and an understanding of the need to check on the personal meanings that students have for the words they use.

The real world is that which is experienced directly. The verbal world is made up of the words used and those that come as reports or reports of reports (history) of the real world. The verbal world is the creation of the symbolic process that allows humans to make sounds for other things.

Guggenheim, (1969) states that only humans have developed ways of decoding sounds into symbolic systems of communication - language that allows the storage, sharing, and use of information. Symbols make it possible to describe the past, explain the present and predict the future. Symbolic thought and behavior give meaning to human existence. Reading is, in reality, the decoding of symbols for words. Unless these symbols arouse meanings in the child's mind, the child is not really reading, he is decoding. This is the main difference between rote learning and concept learning through reading. Concept learning through reading comes when the child has acquired sufficient maturity in the thinking skills to make his reading meaningful. (Wolf,1987)

There is disagreement as to the most effective approach to reading instruction. For example, interpretations of research on the importance of decoding skills are used to

support the application of systematic schemes for teaching phonics. The implication is that learning must first be logically organized and then transmitted to students. (Adams, 1990)

In comparison, observational research provides evidence of the constructive nature of literacy learning. By participating in meaningful literacy events, children derive patterns and rules that they may apply widely. Thus, young learners will reinvent literacy for themselves given rich experiences, opportunity and support.

Recipes for what works, unfortunately, do not exist in a theoretical vacuum. As Chall's (1981) research revealed, teachers presented with new programs tend to carry with them old practices. The rote adoption of even proven practices will not provide necessarily for successful replication over time.

Reading Recovery is a balanced approach that helps high risk students to learn phonological awareness and to use contextual information to assist reading. (Adams, 1990; Slavin,1987)

Reading Recovery is designed specifically for children having difficulty in the first years of formal schooling. It provides children with daily, intensive lessons for a half hour by a teacher who is receiving or has previously received specialized training. It is intended to be a temporary program. When a student shows evidence of an independent system for

reading and can read material typical for his / her class, the student exits the program, making room for another student.

According to Wood (1988), any theory of learning implies a theory of instruction. Adults help children to solve problems and in the process provide conditions that help the children find the patterns and regularities they will use to solve problems alone at future times.

Clay's theory of learning to read is based on the ideas that children construct cognitive systems to understand the world and language. These cognitive systems develop as " self - extending systems" that generate further learning through the use of multiple sources of information. Clay says, all readers need to use and check against each other four sources of information: semantic (text meaning), syntactic (sentence structure), visual (graphemes, orthography, format, and layout) and phonological (the sounds of oral language), (Clay and Cazden, 1990, p.207).

Another individual reading program in addition to Reading Recovery is the Direct Instruction Skills Plan in which teachers use direct instruction to teach reading skills. Guidelines stress mastery, teaching skills in a logical, sequential manner, applying skills in context, careful documentation and a positive approach. The approach is systematic, including pretesting, teaching towards specific criteria, and post - testing.

Reading and Writing Group is a small program taught by a trained Reading Recovery teacher. The goals of instruction for this group are the same as for Reading Recovery; instruction focuses on the development of strategic processes. Teachers use Reading Recovery materials.

Students Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL), Bergman (1992) is a program used within the classroom to promote more comprehension of what is read. Students make a commitment to read, establish a purpose, select a book, read and think using the following four strategies:predict-verify-decide, visualize-verify-decide,summarize-verify-decide, and think aloud. When confronted with an unknown word, students are taught to guess, ignore and read on or go back and reread it. After reading, students determine how well they achieved the purpose they set for themselves, what they will do if they haven't and what they learned both about the product and the process. They also keep learning logs in which they record their thoughts about content and process.

The Success For All program consists of six components: one to one tutoring, a cross grade reading program that groups children according to their reading achievement levels, frequent assessment of student progress, half day preschool, full day kindergarten, and a family support team. A trained program facilitator works with an advisory team which includes the principal, teachers and family support staff. First,

second and third graders reading at the same level are taught as a group. It emphasizes comprehension skills and integration of reading and writing. At eight week intervals, students are assessed to determine who should receive tutoring, change students' reading groups or make adjustments to the child's program.

Pinnell (1990) concluded that the above programs showed factors which could lead students toward success in reading as follows: individual instruction, individual emphasis, and professional development for teachers.

Wasik and Slavin's study (1992) proved that advocates of intervention programs argue that first grade is a critical year for the learning of reading and reading success in the early grades is an essential basis for success in the later grades. Research on Chapter 1 programs suggests that remediation of learning problems after the primary grades is largely ineffective. (Kennedy, Birkman and Demaline,1986) It may be that it is easier to prevent learning problems in the first place than to attempt to remediate them in later years. Considering how much progress the average reader makes in reading between the first and last days of first grade, it is easy to see how students who fail to learn to read during first grade are far behind their peers and will have difficulty catching up.

In a quantitative synthesis of research, Stahl and Miller (1989) describe whole language as a philosophy for teaching reading using meaningful, natural language from literature and from the children's own stories. Skill sequences are not taught directly, but children are expected to deduce phonics patterns from exposure to print. Children are encouraged to write, and then read their own work. Spelling is invented. Children are encouraged to listen carefully to spoken words, to segment, or separate out phonemes, and then to spell, representing these phonemes with letters. Books were read many times until familiar. Individuals and small groups later read and discussed books with the teachers and with each other. The exception to whole language activities involved a ten to twenty minute phonics lesson each Monday based on a sequence of letter - sound associations and words taken from "Recipe for Reading", (Traub and Bloom, 1975)

The above discussion brings into view the two oppositional forces in the teaching of reading: phonics (skills) and whole language (emergent literacy or literature based). Smith (1992) states that the official view of education is that learning is difficult, takes place sporadically, in small amounts, as a result of solitary individual effort. Learning is likely to be quickly forgotten unless retaught many times - especially before exams. Smith offers an informal view which has existed for over 2000 years

in all cultures which he calls the informal view. The informal view states that learning is continuous, spontaneous, and effortless, requiring no particular attention, conscious motivation, or specific reinforcement; learning occurs in all kinds of situations and is not subject to forgetting. In this view, learning is not solitary but social. The official view looks at learning as memorization, while the informal view regards it as growth. In other words, learning is social and developmental. We grow to be like the people we see ourselves as being like. Learning is therefore also a matter of identity, of how we see ourselves. But our identity is determined for us socially as well. Learning is not a consequence of instruction and practice but of demonstration and collaboration.

The verb to teach originally meant "to show". That is what effective teachers do: they demonstrate what can be done and their own attitude toward what can be done, and they help others to do it. They make newcomers members of clubs to which they themselves already belong. Smith (1988) reaffirms that two groups of people together ensure that children learn to read. The first group includes those who read to children; parents, siblings, friends, and above all teachers. The second group is the authors of the books that children love to read. The role of teachers is critical. They must find material of interest to each child so that he / she is protected from boredom, anxiety and failure. The culminating

responsibility of teachers is to hand each child over to authors. Children, even infants, are rarely passive listeners. It is the relationships that exist in the classroom; student-teacher, student-student, and their relationship with what they are reading and writing. Tests are not required to evaluate the learning. We need only observe how involved they are in their reading. Methods can never ensure that children learn to read and our determination to teach every child to read does not mean that every child will learn. The best we can do is to promote interest and competence in literate activities.

PROPOSED SOLUTION STRATEGY

In proposing an early intervention strategy for grades K - 3 in a public school, this author considered firstly the overall state design of a public elementary school. The It's Elementary task force report (1992) states that the mission of the elementary school is to nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral capacities of each child to the fullest extent possible so that each can profit by continued schooling and so that, ultimately, each can lead a fulfilling life in our society as a productive worker, citizen, and private individual. It is recommended that a thinking - meaning curriculum is needed which immerses students in a rich learning environment that connects

classroom activities to the respected uniqueness of the students' personal lives.

Secondly, the state framework for English-Language Arts was a consideration due to the identified need for improvement by the K-3 students. The curriculum was a literature based program in which listening, speaking, reading, and writing were integrated. Students interacted with significant literature and confront important human values. Writing was taught as a process, and students found their own voice as authors and write for authentic purposes and audiences. Skills were developed in context to empower students for a wide variety of educational and personal uses of literacy.

Within the above guidelines, the K - 3 staff made sure all the children experienced success every day in the regular classroom and computer lab staffed with categorical personnel.

To enhance the curriculum and provide motivational activities for reading, the author received a grant for a Reading is FUNdamental chapter. All students received their own books three times during the school year. Parents and volunteers helped with selection and distribution. As Smith (1992) suggests, promoting the child's interest as well as interaction with respected adults and materials will help the child toward creating his / her own success which is the primary goal of this practicum. The interaction of staff, children and parents in carrying out the Reading is

FUNdamental project fostered interest in reading and parental involvement in the children's success.

Previously, the Student Study Team's function was to identify only those students who had experienced failure over several years and were now ready for special education. Early intervention strategies discussed in the research recommended close observation and immediate referral for categorical services at the very first signs of difficulty. The Student Study Team was expanded to include representation from categorical staff and parents and met at least twice a month to discuss referrals and progress of the children placed in intervention.

Teachers used a pre-test and post-test for narrative and expository reading (Appendix A) to determine students' performance level(Appendix B)before and after intervention. The Student Study Team monitored all progress so that at least one half of all children referred improved by at least one performance level.

Beyond RIF, Study Study Team another strategy to further increase parent involvement, a parent education series of four topics took place as follows: Reading With Children Activities, How to Help Your Children be Successful in School, Self Esteem for Parents, and Family Communication Skills.

Due to the end of the school year, this writer

preferred an intervention model inside the normal classroom setting so as not to disrupt the students' familiar routine while still allowing the staff freedom to experiment with shared research information from Wasik and Slavin (1992) and especially Bergman's (1992) SAIL program. The author closely monitored all results mentioned in the goals and objecives section as well as appendices A and B with the purpose of demonstrating a worthwhile intervention program for the early grades districtwide to adopt during the following school year.

Chapter V Strategy Employed

The end of the school year had some advantages and disadvantages to the implementation process. Firstly, the staff, although thay had earlier approached the author to help them improve K - 3 reading performance, felt that there were too many year end activities and state mandated tests taking place to really obtain any detectable results. Some staff members argued that no time during the year would be a best time, and even if there were no qualitative results the benefits of the plan would vastly outweigh the present situation as a whole. All agreed that the student study team should be expanded to include categorical personnel and specialists at least twice a month but felt flexibility was needed for attendance due to extra duty assignments and other obligations. It was finally agreed that a team would be set up for each nine week grading period during the year which meant five meetings a year maximum for most staff.

Earlier in the year, a survey was sent home to parents requesting their choice on topics of interest for evening workshops. The response was excellent. 21% responded and 5% of those responding attended at least one workshop. See appendix C. Classroom visitors and volunteers increased by 12%. Meetings of advisory committees held firm with 16% lack of quorum.

Working closely with K - 3 teachers was definitely a positive growth experience. Two of the teachers had more than twenty years experience and two had seven years experience. All of them were very enthusiastic about trying different strategies and stated that they were not aware of the reading curriculum as meaning focused so much as skill focused at the primary grade level. They felt that all of their time and effort had been devoted to letter, sound, and word recognition although they agreed that mere decoding was not reading. During the ten week reading intervention period, (see appendix D for complete calendar of activities) they taught the children when, how and why to use metacognition strategies, error detection, and error correction.

Staff was unaware of the board policies regarding program evaluation requiring seventy per cent mastery of targeted objectives. Although the skills based measuring system was in place and functioning, formal feedback in the form of computerized reports went only to parents and teachers. No statistics had been presented to the school board which could have lead to improvement plans, even though the board policy indicated this should happen.

The student study team conducted a needs assessment in the four targeted K - 3 classrooms and the computer lab finding a need to purchase additional state recommended reading list sets, listening sets, speech synthesizers and Mobius Kidsware software, CD ROM players and CDs. They also

visited the library and discussed redesigning the physical layout to improve space to accomodate a reading area for primary children. At present the library has no furniture for small children. They also explored the possibility of using the kindergarten room in the afternoon for more reading intervention if needed.

K - 3 teachers identified students for intervention using various criteria: norm referenced criterion test results, reading performance, teacher opinion, parent opinion, strengths and weaknesses. Team members decided to choose eight students from each grade showing the greatest difficulty in reading. Teachers read one familiar fiction and one non - fiction book per grade to each group, then asked them to mentally ask themselves questions on each book before reading it aloud. Teachers recorded the questions each student asked about the stories and added some of her / his own to pose to each student in using the assessment instruments in appendices A and B. Narrative was used for the fiction book and expository for non-fiction.

Results of the pretest showed 85% of all students scoring in performance levels (appendix E) three and four, 15% in level five, the greatest difficulty in the theme, organizing facts, and applications quadrants of the assessment instruments.

Each of the four teachers spent at least twenty minutes a day with the eight students reading for meaning in a cooperative learning group. Students were asked to look at the cover and find picture and word clues to predict the story then each student was given a page to look at to discover more clues. The teacher asked each student to tell the group what picture or word clue he / she found. The teacher then read the story aloud while the children closed their eyes to mentally visualize the action. Oral questions were solicited from each student and recorded on a story log. The kindergarten teacher read each page as the children followed along and pointed to recognized letters and words. They role played the story, drew pictures, answered the story log questions aand reconstructed the story.

The children from grades one through three read to each other in alternating pairs guessing at words if neither one knew the word. The teacher had students focus not only on what they understood about the story but how they helped each other to understand, thus validating all of their efforts toward comprehension.Students were taught to use the pictures to set personal goals for what they wanted to know on each page. They learned how to detect errors and correct errors by asking themselves the five W and H questions to test for comprehension:

Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Two weeks were spent on each familiar book. Two were fiction alternating with two non-fiction books.

During and after the intervention period, all students received a free book of their choice through the Reading is FUNdamental program. Since they now experienced good feelings when reading, they welcomed RIF day with much enthusiasm and eagerly discussed plans for reading their very own book.

The student study team met with this author three times to monitor progress and discuss evaluation, needed adjustments and suggestions for modifications. 20 of 32 students increased by one performance level as indicated by the posttest. The objective for goal two on page 14 indicated a desired outcome of 16 of 32 participants improving by one performance level. Nevertheless, results surpassed expectations although students actually had about seven and a half weeks of intervention due to interruptions by start up, state mandated testing and year end procedures.

Chapter VI Conclusions - Implications and Recommendations

The need for an early intervention reading program was recognized by the school district after analyzing norm referenced and performance based testing results over a five year period. Most students enrolled at the first grade level with low readiness skills as a result of disadvantaged home experiences and a lack of preschool and / or kindergarten opportunities.

In an attempt to foster high achievement, the student study team was enlisted by this author to identify low performing students for a ten week reading intervention program within the classroom. The increased use of cooperative learning strategies helped students to work constructively and responsibly. They learned to perform leadership and supportive roles within the group. They demonstrated responsibility to their peers and learned that each individual's success is also the group's success. Working in a small group with their teacher gave them the stimulus they needed to take more risks than competing for her attention in a large room of more advanced readers. The teachers were surprised and pleased with their students' progress. Teachers, parents, and students learned that success fosters more success, nevertheless, support from peers and parents is essential for the motivation toward continual achievement. The desired outcome for goal three on page 15

to increase parent participation at least 25% at all functions was accomplished through parent workshops and classroom volunteers

The primary grades' curriculum was so filled with tasks, teachers concentrated on imparting information rather than verifying comprehension on a daily basis. They felt tests served that purpose.

Members of the student study team felt it was a good idea to include specialists, parents, and categorical staff to refer children. The team, who met four times in two months as stated in the desired outcome for goal two on page 14, saw the need for in-depth studies of children who require individualized help for learning difficulties. They learned that the team is not only a referral process to the special education program but rather an opportunity to discuss all concerns for student development with colleagues who have various areas of expertise in problem solving.

The goals and objectives for the intervention program were all met with very promising results. All participants in the effort came to the following three conclusions:

1. In order to have the greatest impact on student achievement students' needs must be identified and addressed within their first three years of school.
2. In order to develop a sense of self worth and competence in each student, responsibilty and pride in achievement must be fostered.

3 In order to enhance meaningful collaboration between school and home, the school program must support families and provide resources that effectively influence their children's academic success.

This author kept the superintendent apprised of the early intervention efforts and results. As a consequence, several changes will take place at all district schools in grades k - 12 for the coming school year.

The parent education workshops will become a permanent feature at every site from October to April as requested by parents. Parent participation on advisory committees will continue as a positive partner with school staff in preparing children for a successful future.

Each school will have an expanded Student Study Team, comprised of teachers, parents, resource specialists, categorical staff, and parents, rotating quarterly, who meet twice monthly to identify children in need of reading intervention, as well as follow up on progress of all participants. Two full time categorically funded counselors were hired to link home, child and Student Study team as additional support toward student success.

All computer labs will be used to enhance the core curriculum by offering individualized instruction to all students identified for Miller - Unruh reading, Chapter 1 reading, Special Education, and primary language programs.

All other students will receive individualized instruction at their particular developmental level

One primary teacher will receive training in the Reading Recovery method and serve four first grade children during the year.

The school day will begin one half hour earlier to accommodate a longer reading intervention program and the Reading is FUNdamental program will continue with more literacy activities for both children and adults.

This author feels very fortunate to have directed this wonderful activity, however, if called upon to develop another, offers the following recommendations:

1. Conduct a long pre-planning period with all those who will carry out and support the program.
2. Before implementing intervention, write a draft of Student Study Team procedures and forms and a draft of possible intervention activities with proven results from recent research.
3. Train all personnel to carry out their activities successfully prior to and during intervention.
4. During the third quarter of the program, if more adjustments are not required, write the final drafts of the Student Study team and Reading Intervention Program handbooks for future participants.

5. For students who continue to show no progress, have parent permission on file to administer a diagnostic instrument and a plan for more prescriptive reading instruction.
6. Celebrate all successes. Children trying to overcome difficulty need constant encouragement and support from those around them.

Developing this early intervention reading program was truly a rewarding experience for all involved. It was the first attempt to involve staff in problem solving which proved to be, in large measure, the reason for success and the overwhelming support for continuing the program. This author is deeply grateful to everyone who made it possible.

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APPENDIX A

N A R R A T I V E

CHARACTERS	K 1 2 3
1. Identify characters	———
2. Describe characters' traits (looks, acts, feels)	———
3. Compare / contrast	———
4. Identify major / minor characters	———
5. Create new characters	———
6. Describe characters' motives (thoughts and feelings)	———

SETTING	K 1 2 3
1. Define where / when	———
2. Identify / describe	———
3. Create new settings	———
4. Distinguish between past, present and future	———

PLOT	K 1 2 3
1. Predict (into, through)	———
2. Determine Real / make believe	———
3. Identify events (what happened)	———
4. Summarize (beginning-middle - end)	———
5. Sequence	———
6. Identify conflict / resolution	———

THEME	K 1 2 3
1. Relate lesson learned from story	———
2. Describe how the story affects the reader as a person	———
3. Link to values	———
4. Describe how theme is shaped by character, setting and plot	———

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APPENDIX B

E X P O S I T O R Y

GATHERING INFORMATION	K 1 2 3
1. Gather sensory information	———
2. Identify and locate resources	———
3. Identify point of view	—

ORGANIZING FACTS	K 1 2 3
1. Expose to various organizational strategies (Teacher directed: tactile and visual)	———
2. Use organizational strategies to organize information	———

MAKING INTERPRETATIONS AND EVALUATIONS FROM TEXT	K 1 2 3
1. Distinguish between fact and opinion	———
2. Develop the skill to form an oral opinion / judgment, based on observation and analysis	———
3. Identify causes for problems	———
4. Identify causes and their effects / consequences on situations	—
5. Develop the skill to express a written opinion / judgment based on observation and analysis	—

APPLICATIONS	K 1 2 3
1. Compare and contrast two or more pieces of information	———
2. Draw analogies to connect and apply information	—
3. Apply information in concrete format	—

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APPENDIX C

PARENT EDUCATION/TRAINING SURVEY

DEAR PARENT(S):

IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT TOPICS PARENTS ARE INTERESTED IN, PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHILD. RETURN ONLY ONE FORM PER FAMILY.

PLEASE MARK AN X NEXT TO THE TOPICS THAT ARE OF INTEREST TO YOU. PLEASE MARK 4 AREAS.

____ SINGLE PARENTING

____ PREVENTING TEEN PREGNANCY AND PARENTING

____ DEALING WITH DIVORCE / STEP FAMILIES

____ DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

____ PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

____ COPING WITH CHILDREN WITH HYPERACTIVE TENDENCIES OR ATTENTION PROBLEMS

____ SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND A.I.D.S

____ HELPING YOUR CHILD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL

____ EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

____ PREVENTING GANGS

____ EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE AND PROBLEM SOLVING

____ PARENTING CLASSES: A 6 WEEK COURSE CALLED "SYSTEMATIC TRAINING FOR EFFECTIVE PARENTING" (One two-hour session per week)

I/WE HAVE CHILDREN ENROLLED AT: (PLEASE CHECK)

____ ELEMENTARY
____ PRIMARY
____ ELEMENTARY
____ HIGH SCHOOL
____ HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT NAME(S)_____DATE_____

DAYTIME PHONE_____EVENING PHONE_____

HOURS THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO ATTEND TRAININGS: (CIRCLE ONE)

8:00-4:00 4:00-7:00 PM 7:00-9:00 PM OTHER TIME_____

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APPENDIX D

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

Week 1 - The writer met with the principal and K - 3 staff to familiarize them with the proposed intervention plan. The expanded Student Study Team convened including specialists and categorical support staff.

Week 2 - The writer familiarized K - 3 teachers on board policies regarding curriculum and evaluation methods. Staff identified students and administered the pre - test. Parents attended the first parent education workshop on How to Help Your Child be Successful in School.

Week 3 - K - 3 teachers conducted a needs assessment in their classrooms and computer to improve the articulated reading curriculum.

Week 4 - Two presenters held workshops on Reading With Children and Self Esteem for Parents.

Week 5 - The writer met with volunteers and staff to plan the distribution of the Reading is FUNdamental books to all children and carry out literacy activities related to literacy week. The third parent workshop took place on Preventing Violence in Schools. The writer met with the School Site Council to inform them of the early intervention plan.

Week 6 - The writer met with the K - 3 teachers and categorical staff for midcourse adjustments as needed.

Week 7 - The writer held a discussion with the K - 3 teachers and categorical staff on the performance levels and helped them to observe students using this method.

Week 8 - The writer observed the K - 3 classrooms at reading time to monitor progress.

Week 9 - The writer met with the Student Study Team for follow up on progress.

Week 10 - The writer met with the principal and the K - 3 teachers and the computer lab teacher for a progress report and recommendations for the future school year.

APPENDIX E

PERFORMANCE LEVELS FOR READING

LEVEL 6

Student performances at this level demonstrate insight as readers consider a whole text. These readers are confident and willing to take risks as they explore the meaning of a text; are open to considering and developing new ideas about a text and use the text to check their understanding; explore complexities in depth; revise their interpretations; expand on the possible meanings of a text; and connect ideas developed in the reading experience to their own experiences and to the world at large.

LEVEL 5

Student performances at this level demonstrate perception and thoroughness in considering a whole text. These readers are confident and willing to take risks as they explore the meaning of a text; consider new ideas about a text and use the text to check their understanding; explore complexities and expand on the possible meanings of a text; often revise their interpretations; and connect some ideas developed in the reading experience to their own experiences and to the world at large.

LEVEL 4

Student performances at this level demonstrate a thoughtful understanding of a whole text. These readers are confident in their interpretation, but have lettle willingness to take risks, tending to accept their initial understanding; ususally connect their understanding in a general or limited way; and identify some general significance or wider application of their understanding of a text.

LEVEL 3

Student performances at this level demonstrate a plausible, general understanding of a whole text. These readers make superficial connections with or among the parts of a text or not at all; are safe readers, unwilling to take risks, with little tolerance for difficulties in a text; rarely question a text, but when they do, the questions are likely to be simple or superficial;; do not revise their first interpretation of a text or explore other possibilities of meaning.

LEVEL 2

Student performances at this level demonstrate a superficial understanding of a text. These readers may not see a text as a whole, tending to focus only on portions of a text; occasionally recognize ideas without connecting them; seldom ask questions of a text or offer meaningful evaluations of what they have read; and may not read a complete text.

LEVEL 1

Student performances at this level demonstrate an understanding of only an individual word, phrase, or title in a text. These readers do not demonstrate any understanding of the ideas or experiences offered or developed. Reading at this level is an act of recognizing a word or phrase rather than a process of constructing coherent meaning.